WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

**Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds on
Wednesday, 4th October, 2017 at 10.00 am**

MEMBERSHIP

Val Slater	City of Bradford MDC
Megan Swift	Calderdale MBC
Erin Hill	Kirklees MBC
Lisa Mulherin(Chair)	Leeds City Council
Olivia Rowley	City of Wakefield MDC

Agenda complied by: John Grieve
Governance Services
Civic Hall
Leeds, LS1 1UR
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A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			**APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS** To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2 of the Access to Information Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded) (In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2, written notice of an appeal must be received by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting	
2			**EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC** 1 To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report. 2 To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information. 3 If so, to formally pass the following resolution:- **RESOLVED –** That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-	

3	**LATE ITEMS**	
	To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration	
	(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes)	
4	**DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**	
	To disclose or draw attention to any disclosable pecuniary interests for the purposes of Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 and paragraphs 13-16 of the Members' Code of Conduct.	
5	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**	
	To receive apologies for absence (If any)	
6	**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**	1 - 6
	To confirm as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2017.	
	(Copy attached)	
7	**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**	
	To consider any matters arising from the minutes.	
8	**HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT**	7 - 14
	To consider a report by the Director of Children's Services which sets out the structural and reporting arrangements for the Regional Adoption Agency.	
	(Report attached)	

9			**VOICE AND INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE REPORT**	15 - 28
			To consider a report by the Director of Children's Services which sets out details of the Adopted Teens identity group (AT_iD group) and the view of children and young people who are adopted.	
			The report also explains the initial plans for ensuring that children and young people have a voice and influence over decisions that affect their lives and the adoption services they access.	
			(Report attached)	
10			**PERFORMANCE REPORT**	29 - 42
			To consider a report by the Director of Children's Services which sets out the first quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.	
			(Report attached)	
11			**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**	
			Date and time of next meeting to be determined.	
			(All Meetings to be held in the Civic Hall, Leeds)	

b)   Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

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WEST YORKSHIRE ADOPTION JOINT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 28TH JUNE, 2017

Present: Councillor L Mulherin (Leeds) - Chair
Councillor C Thirkhill (City of Bradford) and Councillor O Rowley (City of Wakefield MDC)

Councillor H Hayden (LCC)

In Attendance: S Johal (LCC), S Tariq (LCC), A Hanson (LCC), C Hudson (LCC), S Parkin (LCC), M Freeman-Hacker (LCC), A Mouse (LCC) J Jenkins (Calderdale MBC) R Roberts (LCC), H Lovelady (LCC) and J Grieve (LCC)

1   APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

2   EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

3   LATE ITEMS

There were no late items of business

4   DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

5   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor E Hill, Councillor V Slater and Councillor M Swift.

Councillor C Thirkhill was substituting for Councillor V Slater.

6   MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th March 2017 were agreed as a true and correct record.

7   MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 4th October, 2017

<u>Business Report (Minute No.7 referred)</u> – The Chair made reference to Resolution (iii) and the decision to issue a standing invitation for representatives from the Voluntary Adoption Alliance to attend future meetings of this Committee, the Chair queried if an invitation to attend had been sent.

In responding, the Head of Service reported that an invitation had been issued, however, the Voluntary Adoption Alliance were not able to send a representative to each meeting, but had indicated a representative would be in attendance when certain themes were being discussed and they would continue to get the agenda and the minutes of the meeting.

<u>Structure Report (Minute No. 9 referred)</u> – Members sought an update on the receipt of guidance around inspection regime for Management Boards.

In responding, the Head of Service said the Minister responsible had lost his seat as Member of Parliament at the recent General Election which had led to some delay. Robert Goodwill MP had been appointed as the new Minister of State at the Department for Education on 12th June 2017. It is understood that a move to regionalisation was still been taken forward as a policy by the Government.

8   ADOPTER DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which set out details of the Adopter Development Co-ordinators (Adoptive Parents employed and funded by the One Adoption Agency) and their role to work with the regional adoption agencies across Yorkshire and the Humber region to develop adopter led services.

The Chair welcomed and introduced; Sam Parkin, Marnie Freeman-Hacker and Andrew Mouse, Adopter Development Co-ordinators (ADC's) for the North & Humber, West and South areas. Each ADC was appointed in February 2017 and would be in place until February 2018, each working 15 hours per week.

It was reported that the main roles of the ADC was to conduct further, fuller research and engagement with adopters in the region with a view to developing:

- An Adopters Charter for adoption agencies to sign up to, guaranteeing a common minimum service standard across the region
- Establishment of a Peer Mentoring scheme to provide additional support for adopters beyond the current offer.
- Easier Access to Adoption Support, with a better focus on communication and relationships.
- Adopter Led/ engaged Training, more training for adopters

Proposed Timescales:

- May – August - Draft Charter for consultation & research carried out
- September – November - Secure login website area pilot and gather data
- December – February - Peer support pilot & training plan agreed.
- Adopter Charter Agreed. Adopter led services to be piloted

Members welcomed the work being undertaken, one Member commenting that if you support the adopter, they are then in a better position to support the child. "Get it right at the beginning to avoid problems later"

Members queried if there was an opportunity for children to have a voice.

In responding officers confirmed that there was a group called the AT_ID that is a group across the Yorkshire and Humber region for adopted teenagers.

The Chair requested if more details could be provided on this particular issue and suggested that a report be prepared for the next meeting about the views of young people.

RESOLVED –

(i)   To endorse the information provided by the Adopter Development Co-ordinators

(ii)   To support their work in going forward

(iii)   That a report be prepared for the next meeting explaining how the views of young people are expressed.

9   **HEAD OF SERVICE REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided a summary of the structural and reporting arrangements for the Regional Adoption Agency for the first two months of becoming established.

The Head of Service, One Adoption West Yorkshire presented the report spoke in detail about the following:

- Senior Leadership Team
- Staffing
- Team in transition
- Adoption Panels
- Establishing the culture
- Practice focus
- Recruitment & Marketing, website
- Matching
- Links with senior leadership team in partner Local Authorities

The Head of Service reported that recruitment to vacant posts was continuing with on-going recruitment for adoption advisors, advanced practitioners, social workers and business support positions. Interviews for business support vacancies were planned throughout June and July.

It was noted that all staff had been provided with a One Adoption mobile phone which would assist in enabling them to access the Leeds ICT system, including Mosaic, the integrated children's case recording system utilised by OAWY. Also all staff had now been issued with a One Adoption West Yorkshire email account your.name@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk

Referring to the role of Adoption Panels and the process by which panels make recommendations on the suitability of prospective adopters, the Head of Service reported that adoption panels would sit on 7 occasions per month across 3 OAWY bases (Bradford, Huddersfield and Leeds)

Referring to paragraphs 3.20 and 3.21 of the submitted report Members queried the support provided to birth parents of children, following the adoption of their child. Members took the view that some kind of interface was required.

In responding, the Deputy Director, Children and Families said work was on-going across a number of local authorities providing a support service for parents who have had children removed from their care and further work was being developed to identify which of the services would deliver the most appropriate support.

In summing up the Chair said that the transition appeared to have gone very smoothly, could the thanks and appreciation of the Joint Committee be conveyed to all teams on the completion of a successful move.

RESOLVED –

    (i)   To welcome the progress made and to support the further progression of these arrangements

    (ii)   That the thanks and appreciation of the Joint Committee be conveyed to all teams on the completion of a successful move

10   PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which set out the practice improvement framework and baseline performance data for One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY)

In addressing the main issues the Head of Service, One Adoption West Yorkshire reported that work had been undertaken to establish the key

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 4th October, 2017

performance criteria which would form the basis for practice improvement for the agency (Appendix No. 1 of the submitted report referred). Parallel work had also taken place to establish the baseline data which showed the patterns, trends and snapshot information relating to adoption activity in the past 3-5 years in each local authority.

The Head of Service said that a performance group had been set up across the region involving a lead officer from each Local Authority (LA) to ensure that the data was effectively shared with OAWY and that this work be further developed. Further data from Local Authorities partners was also required as the service moved forward and development work continued (Appendix 2).

It was suggested that Adoption Support was one area that required more detailed consideration. There were a number of discussions locally, regionally and nationally about the data requirements that would assist in measuring performance and the adopter voice forum was working closely with OAWY in developing this. This work will be presented to the next meeting.

In offering comment the Chair that focus required concentrating on the recruitment process, it was very important to get the right family.

Members queried if children had a voice in terms of "did they want to be adopted"

In responding the Deputy Director, Children and Families suggested that young children did not have much of a say, but older children do have a say, and sometimes adoption is not the best route for older children and they may remain in care longer term and not be adopted.

With reference to the data on prospective adopters, Members queried the length of time potential adopters were waiting to adopt a child.

In responding the Head of Service said that progress through the adoption process could take some time due to the preparation required; the needs of the child had to be taken into account, would the adopter be willing take a wide range of children, what was the child's cultural needs, heritage and how would the adopter be positioned towards such issue.

RESOLVED –

(i)   To endorse the proposed practice improvement framework and baseline data and to support the continued development of this work

(ii)   That further information about Adoption Support and the data requirements that would assist in measuring performance be the subject of a report to the next meeting of this Committee

11   DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That the next meeting be arranged for Wednesday 4th October 2017 at 10.00am in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

12   CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair reported that today's meeting would be the final meeting when Howard Lovelady, Project Manager, Children & Families, would be in attendance.

In paying tribute the Chair said Howard had been a key figure in the establishment One Adoption Agency, his knowledge, skill and commitment would be really missed.

Members joined the Chair in expressing their best wishes to Howard and wished him well in his future endeavours.

Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 4th October 2017

Subject: Head of Service Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

1. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.

2. This report provides a summary from the Head of Service on the developments of the service in the first two months of becoming established

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is requested to:

   a) Note the progress of the agency; and
   b) support the progression of these arrangements.

1. **Purpose of this report**

1.1 This report sets out the structural and reporting arrangements for the Regional Adoption Agency.

2. **Background information**

2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council. One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.

3. **Main issues**

Staffing

3.1 Recruitment to posts has continued with all the 4 adoption advisors starting in post in the last two weeks. Advanced practitioner posts are all now recruited to with 1 awaiting a start date. Business support staff are moving into positions, with a further round of recruitment ongoing. The practice improvement manager post is recruited to, start date end of October.

3.2 There are 3 members of staff retiring or leaving in the next two months, and a number on staff on maternity leave, including the family finding team manager in Leeds. Temporary cover has been recruited to with an external appointment, due to start in October. Additional temporary social worker vacancies have been advertised and recruited to, to assist with demand in family finding and adoption support, rather than using agency cover .

3.3 Existing social work staff are being offered the opportunity to transfer internally before positions are released on a permanent basis. A number of staff have made a request for their terms and conditions be with Leeds- this has been agreed as the requests are made. A further meeting is arranged with HR and the Trade Unions to take this forward with staff who wish

Business Support

3.4 The business support functions of OAWY have now been agreed and progress is being made in setting up systems to support the work of the agency with key processes around the panel work, children's planning and children's tracking developing well. Areas of work currently supported by 2 local authorities will be transferred over by the end of September.

Information Management and Technology

3.5 Mosaic training has been completed for existing staff for recording casework and migration of existing cases is continuing. This has been slower than anticipated due to issues with business support capacity and IT issues. The transfer of cases is a

key priority for the next two months with an aim for all records to be moved over by the end of October.

3.6   The tracker for monitoring children through the adoption process from legal gateway is in place and the data is improving. We have a new URN (RAA1) and provided the first Adoption leadership board (ALB) quarterly data return.

3.7   However, IT issues have been problematic with the issues being complex and technical .The difficulties are more pronounced for those staff who have moved offices and for staff who work across office bases. In summary, the issues are with connectivity and the reliance on Wi- Fi and the intermittent strength; use of the guest Wi-Fi and timescales in requiring login back in; printing; slowness and freezing screens.

3.8   Staff based in Bradford have moved to an alternative office base that has temporarily resolved some issues regarding connectivity and the longer term location of these staff is being discussed with colleagues in Bradford. Staff in Huddersfield have moved to a location with a more reliable internet connection which is positive and the Halifax staff are due to move offices in October which may improve connectivity.

3.9   The regional IT group continues to meet to resolve the issues.

Duty

3.10   On the 1st July we implemented a One Adoption Duty system working out of Kernel House following the transitional period. This has been very effective within the 2 months and following feedback from staff and research on the times of duty calls we have amended duty times: now 10am- 4pm each day (3.30pm on Friday) to allow time for staff to get to Kernel House and be ready, with IT support, to take calls from 10am. This will run for 6 months and will then be reviewed. The majority of calls on duty relate to adoption support, enquiries from professionals about staff across the region and recruitment enquiries. We have qualified social workers, adoption advisors and business support staff operating duty with a team manager and service manager on a rota basis to ensure the service is effective.

Adoption Panels

3.11   Adoption Panel training was undertaken in June and the panel protocol has been agreed with guidance for staff across One adoption and the local authorities been issued. Plans are in place to roll out the electronic panels starting with Huddersfield and then the Bradford panels and further panel training is being undertaken in November.

<u>Establishing the culture</u>

3.12 Following the first three months of forming the agency the last two months, compounded by the IT issues has presented challenges for all staff as differences in practices across the region come into play and relationships are not yet fully developed. Building relationships across the team manager group is key to ensuring that trust, understanding and a focus on outcomes is maintained in embedding the culture.

<u>Practice</u>

Voice and Influence of Children and Young People:-

3.13 We held a workshop in July with the At_Id group to get their ideas about how we communicate and develop our work with young people to improve services. An action plan to take this work forward within One Adoption is being developed.

Birth Parents

3.14 We have agreed funding for PAC/UK to undertake some work with birth parents across the region regarding their views on services.

3.15 A more detailed report is included elsewhere on the agenda.

<u>Adoption Support</u>

3.16 We are progressing the re-commissioning of independent adoption support services for birth parents, adoptive families and adopted adults. We will commission this jointly with North Yorkshire and Humber Regional Adoption Agency. North Yorkshire Council will take a lead on this as they currently oversee the approved provider list for adoption support across Yorkshire & Humber. South Yorkshire are involved in this and have given a commitment in principal to be involved, pending formal agreement from their local authorities. This is with a view to commence from October 2018 with current contracts being extended from March 18- October 18.

<u>Practice Improvement Fund projects</u>

3.17 Adoption Support Fund (ASF) - One adoption west will pilot a regional adoption support fund. The aim of this to improve adoption support across an RAA by: regional commissioning of the ASF and engaging users in the development and testing of regionalised support services; test out how the ASF could be managed in a regionalised structure including how human and financial resources for adoption support will be deployed and to inform future national policy and delivery of ASF and share emerging practice with other RAAs. We have recruited a project manager to oversee this work.

3.18 *Centre of Excellence* – this is due to start as a pilot in the west with a view to rolling this out across the wider Yorkshire & Humber region with funding for 2 years. We will be recruiting 3 sector led specialists to lead the development work: a senior clinical psychologist, adoption manager and an education specialist. The objectives of this are to look at a framework for assessment of support needs; to develop multi-disciplinary support for adoptive families and to develop a training and development programme for professionals in the sector.

3.19 *Early Permanence Placements (EPP)* - the Voluntary Adoption Alliance have been successful with the practice improvement bid for developing early permanence across the Yorkshire & Humber region and to look at concurrency within the West. This will help us improve our ability to place children earlier for permanence. The objectives of the bid are to:

- build awareness of EPP including concurrency across the whole region and building a champions network

- Developing concurrency placements based on model from North West

- Developing a fostering to permanence pilot for 'harder to place' children

Recruitment & Assessment

3.20 Prospective adopters are making contact with One Adoption WY and attendance at the information evenings across the area has improved and we are currently exploring bigger venues in the Halifax, Bradford and Wakefield areas.

3.21 All recruitment staff have now been trained to use the Attachment Style Interview tool. It will take time to embed the learning from this into the assessment work undertaken it will assist staff in being clear about how we effectively support adopters moving forward.

3.22 The teams have made real progress in agreeing the practice across the teams. In summary we now have the following: Standardised information sessions & pre-approval training; a clear stage one process with all new applications on MOSAIC; agreed criteria for recruitment of adopters, templates agreed for case work and a system for the allocation of assessments and booklets produced for adopters.

Children's Planning & Family Finding

3.23 Operational leads group:- The first meeting took place between Local Authority leads on adoption and the senior leadership team with terms of reference agreed and principles agreed regarding the interface between the local authority and one adoption regarding children's planning and family finding .Following this further work has been undertaken in one adoption and the family finder role within One adoption has been clarified, with staff having a clear understanding of their role which will assist moving forward.

3.24 Prompt matches have been identified for panels to consider and profiles of children and adopters are regularly completed and shared at the regional placement group within one adoption. The system has been set up and is now in place with adoption match for all children to go on this, allowing us a regional view of the children and families available. A system has been established with the voluntary adoption alliance across the region helping us family find for children to avoid any delay. This system will be reviewed in October.

Links with Health

3.25 The first meeting with health commissioners and providers across west Yorkshire was undertaken to discuss the medical advisor role, now working across the region on adoption panels. Issues around consistency of practice & information provided & ability to meet demand was discussed. Agreement was reached about developing key standards and performance indicators regarding the role and the merits of considering a West Yorkshire specification about this role. Discussions were also opened at this meeting regarding the centre for excellence and the adoption support fund and this work will continue.

Links with education

3.26 Following early meetings with virtual heads across the region, we have agreed with the virtual head in Leeds will work with us to arrange an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop with key stakeholders across the west with a view to developing a clear action plan for taking this work forward.

Marketing, website

3.27 The website has been changed and is much improved. There is still work to do and development of this will continue. The enquiries in July were higher than June which is promising. A marketing campaign is due to start across the wider Y & H region from the first week in October in the lead up to national adoption week with an Outdoor campaign and radio campaign.

3.28 In West Yorkshire we are undertaking additional marketing during the last two weeks of September across bus backs and fleet vehicles with posters and billboards to generate more awareness of the brand locally in a run up to the wider campaign.

Performance

3.29 The quarterly report has been produced as a separate item on the agenda.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with affected staff who have transferred in to the agency as well as formal consultation with the trade unions. This is ongoing. Consultation with service users is ongoing to inform the development of the service design and delivery of the agency.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 There are no implications for this report. An Equality Impact assessment is due to start in November.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 There are no budget pressures at the present time. The staffing budget is currently underspent however we have recently recruited additional temporary social workers to deal with demand. The interagency budget is not predicting an overspend at the current time, however we are aware of the need for placements so this will be kept under review.

4.4 Legal implications and access to information

4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5 Risk management

4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:
   a) Note the progress of the agency; and
   b) Support the progression of these arrangements.

Background documents[1]

None

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[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 4th October 2017

Subject: Voice and Influence of Children & Young People Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

1. Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council and One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.

2. This report sets out information regarding One Adoption West and how it ensures that the voice and influence of children and young people is at the heart of the service. The report sets out the information we have to date about the views of adopted children and young people and provides information about the Adopted Teens Identity project (AT_iD) incorporating the views of children and young people who are adopted. The report also sets out the initial plans for ensuring that children and young people have a voice and influence over decisions that affect their lives and the adoption services they access.

Recommendations

1. The Joint Committee is requested to:

   a) Note the information provided by the AT_ID group;
   b) support the work of the agency regarding the voice and influence of adopted children and young people.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 This report sets out information regarding the AT_iD group and the view of children and young people who are adopted. The report also sets out the initial plans for ensuring that children and young people have a voice and influence over decisions that affect their lives and the adoption services they access.

2. Background information

2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council. One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened on this date.

3. Main issues

3.1 The AT-iD stands for Adopted Teens identity. It is a project that was set up by the Yorkshire & Humber adoption consortium with a vision of offering adopted teenagers a space they can call their own and to gain their views about the development of services. It is overseen by PAC/UK who employ a child & family project worker to oversee the development of the group. AT-iD consists of:

- *AT-iD Website* - open to anyone, offering useful information & insight into the experiences of adopted teenagers
- *Online Chat Forum* – A safe online space where adoptees can talk, share, rant, giggle and support each other. Members can also ask questions or seek support from the project workers via the chat forum
- *Activity Days* – providing an opportunity to make new friends and make new memories. They are held 4 times a year and participants get to have a say in what the group does
- *Youth Council* – for those who are looking to get more involved and make a difference in adoption, members aged 13+ can join our panel and attend workshops with the aim of using views and experiences to help professionals and policy makers.

3.2 AT-iD is simply trying to do something that is aimed directly at adopted teenagers by bringing people together and offering a space where they can connect and be themselves.

3.3 In 2014 After Adoption brought together groups of young people on its national TalkAdoption programmes along with the AT-ID group in Leeds to get a national picture of the needs and expectations of adopted young people. This was published in 2016 and is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.4 The project worker who oversees the AT_iD group from PAC/UK has been involved with the regional adoption board steering group, ensuring that voices of adopted young people are integral to the development of regional adoption agencies.

3.5   Young people have been involved in the recruitment to all posts within One Adoption West Yorkshire from the Head of Service appointment through to social workers.

3.6   In 2016 the AT_iD group made a film about adopted young people and this was launched at the Hyde Park Cinema in Leeds. The film talks about their experiences of being adopted and will be shared in the meeting today. This film will be used to raise awareness with prospective adopters; professionals and to share nationally with other Regional Adoption Agencies the views and experience of young people who are adopted.

3.7   In July 2017 we held a workshop in West Yorkshire with the AT_iD group to look at a number of key issues: ideas about how to better communicate with young people across west Yorkshire; ideas how we can improve prospective adopters understanding of young people's needs during their preparation and finally what ideas they have about services that may help them as they are growing up. The notes from the meeting are attached at **Appendix 2**.

3.8   As a result of this workshop we are developing an action plan to take this work forward with the AT_iD group, looking at how this fits in with the other local groups for children and young people across the region.

3.9   It is the intention of One Adoption West Yorkshire that we will provide a report card twice a year looking at the how we evidence the voice and influence of children and young people within the service. This will capture data about our work with young people across the region, including information about events and groups, any complaints and what we are doing to tackle any issues raised by the data. We will report on "best ideas for what worked" during the period the report relates to. The first report card will be incorporated into the first 6 month report of the agency.

4.   Corporate considerations

4.1   Consultation and engagement

4.1.1   There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with young people in Yorkshire through the AT_iD group from the recruitment of staff to the development of practice. This work will continue to be developed.

4.2   Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1   There are no implications for this report.

4.3   Resources and value for money

4.3.1   There are no implications for this report

4.4   Legal implications and access to information

4.4.1   There are no implications for this report.

4.5   Risk management

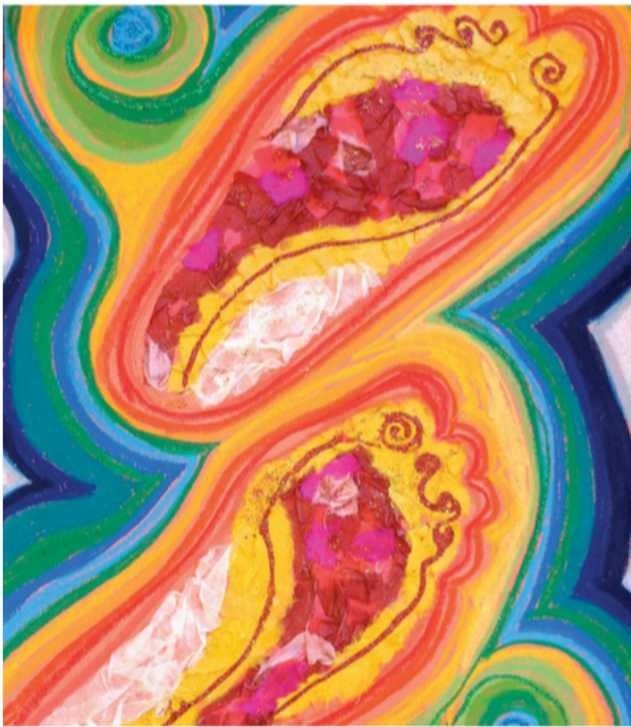4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5.   Recommendations

5.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:

a) Note the information provided by the AT_ID group; and
b) support the work of the agency regarding the voice and influence of adopted children and young people.

6.   Background documents[1]

6.1   None

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[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ADOPTED YOUNG PEOPLE TO SHAPE THE WAY ADOPTION SUPPORT HAPPENS IN THE FUTURE

THE BIG CONSULT

Creating adoption services: lessons from young people

A toolkit for Regional Adoption Agencies to address the issues young adopted people find important.

The Big Consult

Developing adoption services: recommendations from adopted young people.

After Adoption was commissioned by the DfE to consult with adopted young people at the end of 2014 to inform legislation and regulation. Since then, we have obtained their permission to share this more widely as we believe these messages from young people can support the development of Regional Adoption Agencies.

After Adoption brought together groups of young people on its national TalkAdoption programmes along with Being Family (Yorkshire Adoption Consortium) AT-ID group in Leeds to get a national picture of the needs and expectations of adopted young people.

- London   After Adoption TalkAdoption
- Midlands   After Adoption TalkAdoption
- North East   After Adoption TalkAdoption
- North West   After Adoption TalkAdoption
- Wales   After Adoption TalkAdoption
- Yorkshire   Being Family Adopted Teens Identity Group

These groups were linked together by video conference and together they discussed issues around adoption to create recommendations about what should be considered.

In advance of the consultation event, After Adoption worked with its TalkAdoption young people to co-design a list of areas and questions to focus on. The questions they identified were:

- What are the most important things people should learn about being a parent to an adopted young person?
- Think of 5 things which would make life better for adopted young people in school.
- What are the best ways of helping young people know what they want to know about their birth families?
- What are the best ways to make sure adopted young people don't feel on their own in being adopted?

On the day the young people from the Wales group acted as facilitators of the session.

This is an example of After Adoption's method of co-production with young people leading every stage:

- Young people setting the topics
- Young people engaged in discussion
- Young people facilitating and moderating the discussion

This meant that the views represented here really are the views and issues that are important to adopted young people across the country in After Adoption's TalkAdoption groups and Being Family's AT-ID group.

Question the young people addressed	Young people's response and recommendations	After Adoption's checklist for RAAs
What are the most important things people should learn about being a parent to an adopted young person?	*It's all about developing communication between parents and children. Parents need:* • *support to learn how to share difficult and general information* • *help not feel rejected when questions from their children are asked* • *counselling/support to understand and manage children's behaviour* • *access to an external and neutral mediator, rather than local authority social workers* • *to be able to tell children their life story*	Is support easily accessible? Is there support for parents based on the implications of early trauma on children's behavior? Do you have external resources to provide an independent mediator? Is life story work embedded in all work through the child's journey?
Think of 5 things which would make life better for adopted young people in school.	*School can be a really difficult place for us because of feeling different and people not understanding adoption and what it feels like to be adopted.* • *Teachers need special training to understand more about adoption so that they can properly help.* • *It would help other kids if there were special assemblies about being adopted that they could go into other people's schools rather than their own or even make a film about being adopted.* • *There should be a counsellor in school who understands adoption* • *consider linking adopted young people together in a club or mentoring each other (but without making us look different!)* • *please make sure ALL teachers understand that when they're teaching about family trees and genetics as part of the curriculum, they need to understand about adoption too. Lots of us have had really difficult experiences in these classes from early years family trees to GCSE biology where teachers still just don't realise that some children don't like with their biological parents.*	Is there someone in the RAA who has responsibility for linking with education? Does the RAA have a plan for linking with virtual heads? Has the RAA identified funding for schools training on adoption? Does the RAA have a strategy to link to all schools including those which set their own curriculum?

Question the young people addressed	Young people's response and recommendations	After Adoption's checklist for RAAs
What are the best ways of helping young people know what they want to know about their birth families?	*We feel very strongly that we want to understand about our birth families and we think we can deal with real information. We know that sometimes we can't have contact and we want protecting in those cases and to be able to protect ourselves.* • *Life story books are critical sources of information for us. If they aren't done well then we are missing out on a part of our lives. We need as much age appropriate information about our lives before adoption as possible.* • *Once we've been adopted we still need to know how our birth family are doing and well managed, well supported letterbox contact is great for this. Make sure you support our adoptive parents and birth parents with letterbox too – it upsets us when it doesn't work.* • *We want support for adoptive parents right from the beginning of the adoption process on maintaining some form of contact with birth relatives. Adoptive parents need to be able to talk openly about our birth families as we sometimes find it difficult.* • *We need to be able to keep in touch with our siblings. Social workers must work together to make sure that when we are separated by adoption we can keep some sort of contact.*	Is life story work embedded in all work through the child's journey? Is there a clear plan on how life story work brings together information from LA child protection teams with information in the RAA? Is there a letterbox service? Is there a plan for continuity in letterbox service in the transition period when RAAs form? Is there support for adopters? Is there support for birth family members? Is there information on contact and communication in adopter prep training? Is there further training offered as children get older? Are there plans in place for sibling contact assessments from the point of entry into care? Is it clear how these are maintained / reviewed / updated when adoption is the plan? Does this follow through to support around contact after placement and adoption?

Question the young people addressed	Young people's response and recommendations	After Adoption's checklist for RAAs
What are the best ways to make sure adopted young people don't feel on their own in being adopted?	• *Activity days should be available to adoptive families from the point of adoption to ensure adopted children are meeting others like themselves to reduce feelings of isolation and difference, which they can experience throughout their lives.* • *Offer group sessions which young adopted people can access on a regular basis for example once a month on a day which suits their needs. This will provide a sense of belonging and offer peer support by adopted young people being able to share their experiences with each other* • *To ensure young adopted people feel an ongoing sense of support there should be access to a website specifically for young adopted people, a help/textline or something similar which can offer one to one support or enable peer support through an online group (moderated by an adoption worker)*	Are activity days included in the plan? Are they cross agency to maximize attendance and widen peer networks? Is there a programme of group events for adopted young people? Is there an engagement plan for young people? Is access to a website included? Is access to a helpline or text line included?

For further information on how adopted young people can feed into the development of Regional Adoption Agencies including

- Carrying out consultation for your regional agency
- Holding co-production events in your region
- Providing services to meet the needs identified in this checklist

please contact us at the address on the right.

Commissioning team
0161 830 2001
commissioning@afteradoption.org.uk

After Adoption
Citygate 5, 5 Blantyre Street
Manchester M15 4JJ

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What do you know about one adoption west? -What do the agency do, where do you fit in?

Members of AT-iD knew very little about One Adoption. They knew a little more about their local authorities, as some have had contact with social workers and services.

How can we improve the communications with children and young people adopted in the west to improve engagement and participation?

Suggestions were

- Section in a newsletter for teenagers/ young people – but it is parents who receive these and not the teenager.

- Email (although from my experience it is hit and miss depending on the teenager) Many don't use it and can often loose the password is lost so multiple emails addresses are created.
- Those who do use it, tend to be teens who have used it in school or college.

- Posters– perhaps maybe making them visible in school, library's, GP surgeries. church was also suggested.

- Social workers having info and sharing with families – knowledgeable & prepared with info for signposting

- Social media – twitter and Instagram – being the most popular – Facebook isn't as popular for teenagers – but is with parents.

- Information through parents – it seemed that that is how most members here about events/ services at current. Does this pose a problem of it being parent led, or sometimes off putting for teens because its being suggested by a parent (for some, doing something a parent suggest will cause immediate resistance) rather than a peer.

Members were nearly all in agreement that they wouldn't go to a website and search out the information themselves, although some have sought out information relating to other interests. Depends partly on motivation, knowledge and skill.

Schools
Increasing school counsellor knowledge of adoption and services available was desirable to the group – this led to a wider conversation about complexities of school and the sharing of information.
The outcome being that members want school staff (leadership, teachers and pastoral care) to have a better understanding of adoption and be able to treat them as individuals, rather than a group of people who all have the same needs.

Members specifically talked about the desire for teachers to ascertain how and who information about them is shared.

It would be useful to set up a meeting with the virtual head perhaps?

Other groups that members are involved in or aware of are;
- Chill and chat Barnsley
- Leeds teenager groups and cooking crew
- Single adopters group (for parents)
- Youth group in York (not specifically aimed at adoptees)

The lack of knowledge about other groups possibly suggests that they are not getting the communication, or current communication isn't best fit for them. Or perhaps services aren't best fit… probably needs more work on that

People motivation for joining groups were

- Fun!
- Feeling part of a community and belonging
- Sense of support from people who get it and to support others.

How can we improve the understanding of adoptive parents regarding the perspective of young people who are adopted?

Messages to adoptive parents
- We want to feel the same as everyone else
- Parents aren't always the right people to talk to about their feelings
- Don't want conversations to always be parent led, however also helpful for parents to start conversations so child not left feeling anxious about bringing it up.
- Make a special time of the year to talk about it, but also don't want it to be restricted by this time only.

Talking about their story is complex – there is no one size fits all, the response from the group about their memories and ages at which they were told reflected how confusing and traumatic it can be. Their memories and perception differs from actual events

Some felt being told at a young age was inappropriate and should be told older – although they also felt holding back info would impact trust
This highlighted the importance of the right information at the right time.
Parents need support to find the right words
Creative arts help - Films, music, stories and poems

Letterbox

Frustrations at it being process led – e.g waiting for date of letter box to receive it rather than when it was sent

Members want more transparency and explanation as to why information is removed. Or ask for it to be re -written rather than info removed.

Can letterbox agreements change post order to meet the needs of the child – a more individualised approach

Can adoptee have more control over their letterbox as they become adolescents

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Report author: Sarah Johal

Tel: 0113 2783623

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to West Yorkshire Adoption Joint Committee

Date: 4th October 2017

Subject: Performance Report

Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the first quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.

Recommendations

2. The Joint Committee is requested to:

   a) note the proposed performance report format and information; and
   b) support the development of this work.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 This report sets out the first quarterly performance report of the new regional agency.

2. Background information

2.1 Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield adoption functions as specified in the partnership agreement were delegated on the 1st April 2017 to Leeds City Council. One Adoption West Yorkshire formally opened.

2.2 The partnership agreement is clear that One Adoption West Yorkshire will develop a performance management framework and will comply with the key performance indicators set and report upon performance in relation to these to the Management Board of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), the Adoption Leadership board and any other statutory body as required.

2.3 This is the format of the quarterly report and the first quarter performance information.

3. Main issues

3.1 Work has been undertaken to establish the key performance criteria which will form the basis for practice improvement for the agency and this is the first report from the data captured (**Appendix 1**).

3.2 Adoption Support is one area that requires more detailed consideration. There are a number of discussions nationally during September about the data requirements that will assist in measuring performance and the adopter voice forum is working closely with us in developing this. This work will be presented to the next meeting.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 There has been ongoing consultation and engagement with other local authorities and with adoptive parents about the practice improvement framework and performance measures.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.3 Resources and value for money

4.3.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.4   Legal implications and access to information

4.4.1 There are no implications for this report.

4.5   Risk management

4.5.1 There are no implications for this report.

5.   Recommendations

5.1   The Joint Committee is requested to:

a) note the proposed performance report format and information; and
b) support the development of this work.

6.   Background documents[1]

6.1   None

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[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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One Adoption West Yorkshire quarterly performance report

April to June 2017

Introduction/summary

This is the first quarterly report, providing an update on One Adoption West Yorkshire as a new service wanting to improve the lives of children and families across the region.

This report is based in the premise of how much work has been undertaken in the period, how well and what difference has it made. The report is a simple and concise report, with detailed tables in appendices. The report contains a number of tables and charts (when trends allow).

The first two quarterly reports will likely be light on detail and trend analysis as data is not available for an extended period. Future iterations will include trend data as a picture emerges of the impact that the agency is having for children, young people and prospective adopters and adoptive families across West Yorkshire.

In summary children going through the adoption process are down on the average figures per quarter based ion 2016/17 numbers

Key information at the beginning of Quarter 1

At the beginning of this quarter there were:

98 children with a Placement Order but not placed, 27 of these children had been waiting more than 18 months
54 children with a decision for adoption made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM decision) but no placement order.

72 prospective adoptive families awaiting approval
44 in Stage 1
25 in Stage
3 on Hold

62 prospective adoptive families were approved but not matched of which 25 families had been waiting more than 6 months

2

Children

This section of the report provides headline figures relating to children and young people at various stages of the adoption process within West Yorkshire.
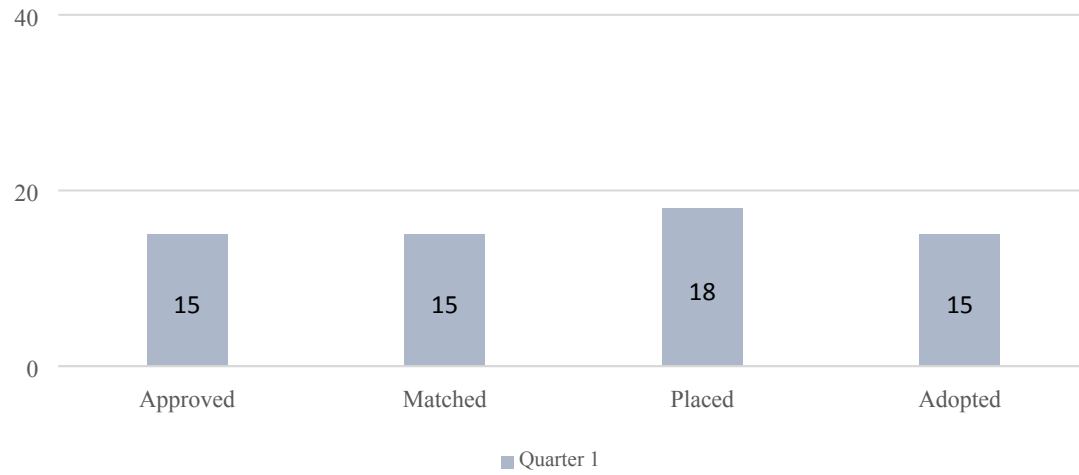
How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
During the quarter • 303 children left care, 42 were adopted *During 2016/17 177 children were adopted, average 45 per quarter* • 46 children had an ADM decision made and 122 had no decision *During 2016/17 211 children had ADM decision made, average 52 per quarter* • 32 placement orders were granted *During 2016/17 200 placement orders were granted, average 50 per quarter* • 37 children were matched to an adoptive family (18 inter agency placements) *During 2016/17 210 children were matched, average 52 per quarter* • 34 children were placed with an adoptive family *During 2016/17 204 children were placed, average 51 per quarter* • 3 children in new EPP *During 2016/17 7 children were in new EPP, average 2 per quarter* *At the end of the quarter* • 122 children being tracked/allocated to family finder prior to ADM (this is indicative data is taken from the One adoption tracker - work in progress) • 132 children have an ADM decision but not yet matched. • 149 children have an ADM decision but are not yet placed. • 97 children have a placement order but are not yet placed. Of these, 37 have been waiting for at least 18 months since entering care • 62 children with an ADM decision have a potential match identified.	• 14% of children leaving care were adopted, (England average is 16%) o Numbers of children going through the adoption process during this quarter are down on the average figures per quarter based on 2015/17 numbers For children who were adopted during quarter one 2017/18, it took an average of: • 439 days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (National Indicator is 426 days) (England Average is 593) • 182 days between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (National indicator is 121 days) (England average is 223)
What would we like to do better?	**What difference did we make?**
• 11 ADM decisions were reversed • There were 2 disruptions	*This section will be used to indicate improvements - eg the average time taken for children from entering care to moving in with their adoptive family reduced this quarter compared to last quarter*

Adopters

This section of the report provides headline figures relating to prospective and approved adopters at various stages of the adoption process in One Adoption. Appendix two contains figures for the year-to-date.

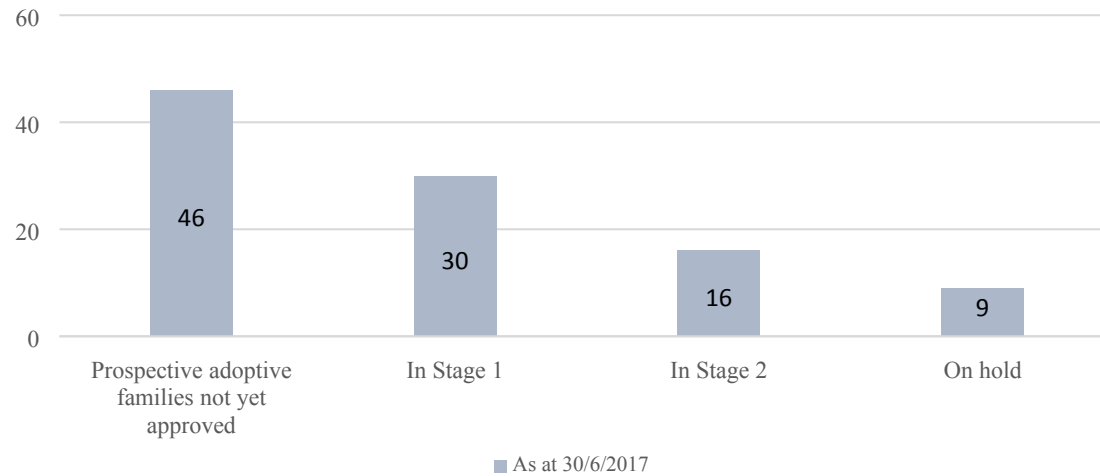| How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
During the quarter	
• Enquiries were received from 38 families	
• 58 prospective adopters attended information sessions	• Of those prospective adoptive families who ended Stage 1 in the quarter, they were in Stage 1 for an average of 2 months
• 23 prospective adoptive families attended preparation training	○ Those still in Stage 1 at the end of the quarter have been in Stage 1 for an average of 4 months
• 15 prospective adoptive families were approved	• Of those prospective adoptive families who ended Stage 2 in the quarter, they were in Stage 2 for an average of 4 months
• 15 prospective adoptive families were matched	○ Those still in Stage 2 at the end of the quarter have been in Stage 2 for an average of 3 months
• 15 adoptive families adopted a child/young person	
At the end of the quarter	• 7 adoptive families matched within three months of their approval; 8 were matched after three months of their approval
• Of the 113 individual approved adopters, 60 are female and 53 are male. 18 (16 per cent) are from a BME background	• The average time taken from approval to matching is 9 months
• 46 prospective adoptive families are not yet approved	
• 30 prospective adoptive families are in stage one; 16 are in stage two	
• 9 prospective adoptive families are on hold	
What would we like to do better?	**What difference did we make?**
• 61 approved adoptive families are yet to be matched.	*This section will be used to indicate improvements - eg waiting time for adoptive families to be matched was lower this quarter than last quarter*
○ 22 of these families have been waiting more than six months	
○ 22 of these families have a matching panel booked	
○ 4 of these families have a match identified but no panel date booked	
• We need to achieve a higher number of enquiries	

Adopters through the process

	Quarter 1
Approved	15
Matched	15
Placed	18
Adopted	15

■ Quarter 1

Commentary

This graph shows numbers of adopters going through the process in Quarter 1. As we move forward we will see Q2, Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.

Position at end of Quarter

	As at 30/6/2017
Prospective adoptive families not yet approved	46
In Stage 1	30
In Stage 2	16
On hold	9

■ As at 30/6/2017

Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters at various stages in the process at the end of Quarter 1. As we move forward we will see Q2, Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.
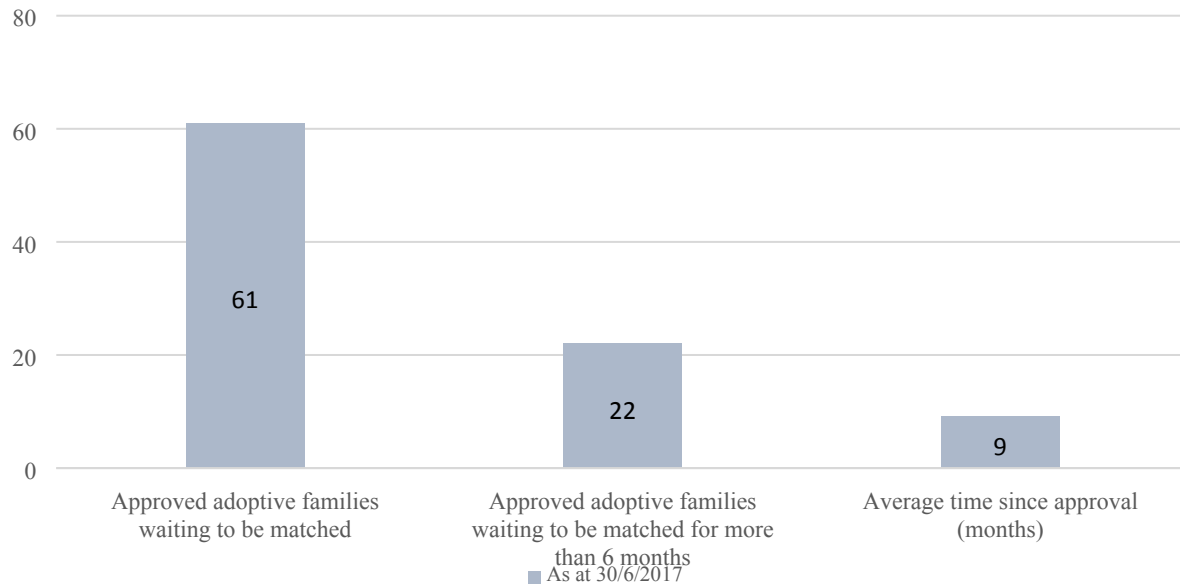
Position at end of Quarter

Commentary

This graph shows the number of adopters at various stages in the process at the end of Quarter 1. As we move forward we will see Q2, Q3 and Q4 included in the graph as comparisons.

Snapshot Figures
This section of the report looks at characteristics of prospective adopters who are approved but not yet matched and those characteristics of children still waiting to be matched as at the end of the quarter. **This section is work in progress and requires further development.**

Adopters	Children
X prospective adoptive families approved not matched	X With a decision not yet **matched**
CHARACTERISTICS	**CHARACTERISTICS**

7

Adoption Support

This section is work in progress and requires further development.

Non Agency Adoption

This section is work in progress and requires further development

Appendix 1

This appendix contains a range of measures related to prospective adopters progressing through the approval and adoption process.

Table A6: individuals and families progressing through the approval and adoption processes

	Enquiries		Progress through the adoption process **(families)**				
	Individuals	Families	Applications	Approved	Matched	Placed	Adopted
Quarter one	69	38	12	15	15	18	15
Quarter two							
Quarter three							
Quarter four							
Year-to-date	**69**	**38**	**12**	**15**	**15**	**18**	**15**

Table A7: snapshot numbers of prospective adopters at different stages of the approval process

	Prospective adoptive families:				Approved adoptive families waiting:		
	Not yet approved	In stage one	In stage two	On hold	To be matched	To be matched for more than six months	Average time since approval (months)
Quarter one	46	30	16	9	61	22	9
Quarter two							
Quarter three							
Quarter four							
Year-to-date	**46**	**30**	**16**	**9**	**61**	**22**	**9**

Table A8: characteristics of approved adopters **(individuals)**

	Female	Male	BME
At 30 June 2017	60	53	18
At 30 September 2017			
At 31 December 2017			
At 31 March 2018			
Year-to-date	**60**	**53**	**18**

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